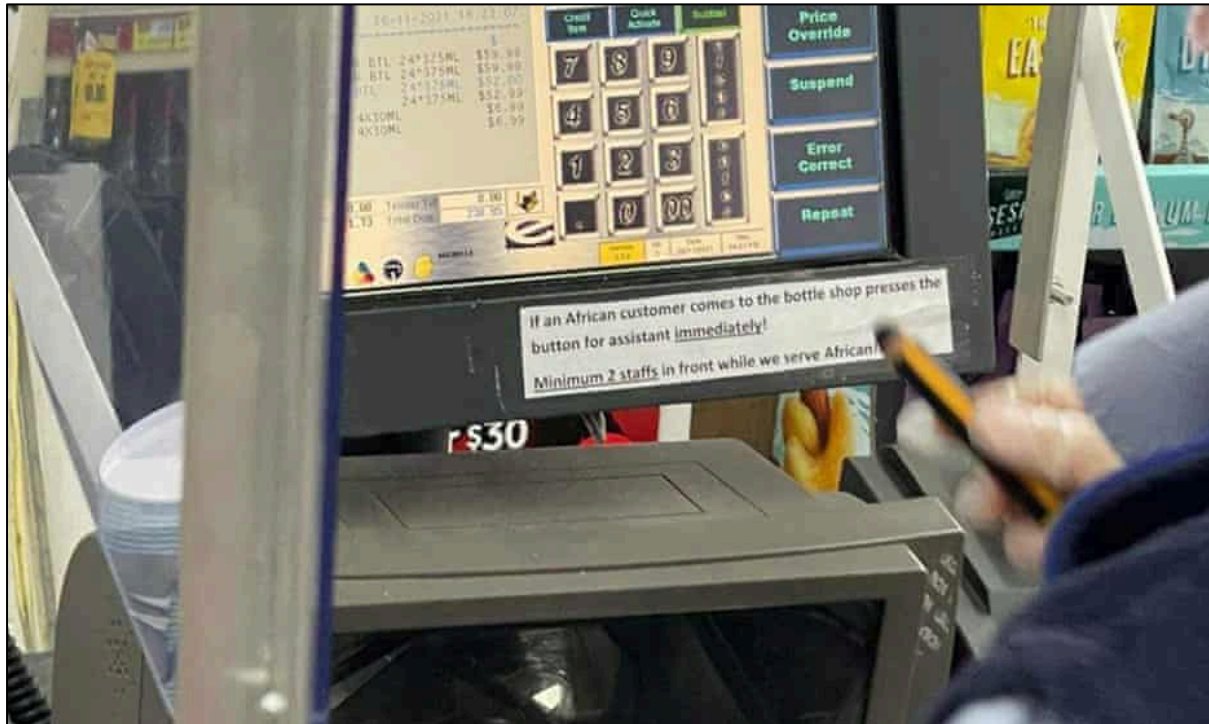


## ‘Completely unacceptable’: IGA supermarket under fire for sign racially profiling African customers

*Sign on the cash register at store in Melbourne’s Sunshine West told staff to seek assistance when serving African people*



*The sign on the cash register at the IGA in Sunshine West told staff to seek assistance if an African customer came in.*

Josh Taylor  
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A supermarket in Melbourne’s western suburbs has apologised over a sign on its register that told staff to get help when African people entered the store.

The ABC reports the sign at the IGA in Sunshine West had been taped to the register for three years, and it said: “If an African customer comes to the bottle shop presses [sic] the button for assistance immediately! Minimum 2 staffs [sic] in front while we serve Africans.”

The sign has been removed after an image of it was circulated on social media.

Guardian Australia called the IGA in question and was told “no comment”, but a representative of the store told the ABC he apologised for the sign, arguing the button was for safety reasons and for when the store was busy.

“We apologise for what we’ve done. I’m sorry it will never happen again like that,” he reportedly said.

A spokesperson for IGA's parent company Metcash said the sign was "completely unacceptable".

"When we saw the video, we promptly took corrective action with the store in question, including immediate removal of the sign," the spokesperson said.

"It is not reflective of the other 1,300 IGA stores out there, who genuinely take pride in serving their local communities each and every day."

The Metcash spokesperson said training for store staff was under way.

Melbourne lawyer Maker Mayek said he was not surprised by the sign.

"It has happened numerous times before when African men have been racially profiled, whether by the police or in public spaces," he said.

"So I am not surprised that a supermarket has targeted a community to be watched as if they're coming to steal.

"The sad fact is, it's happened before, it's happened now with IGA and it's definitely going to happen in the near future."

He said the training was "rubbish" used to "deflect scrutiny".

"In our communities, it shouldn't be happening. It's as simple as that. It really doesn't need training," he said.

It has been more than three years since the so-called "African gang crisis" in Melbourne received widespread media coverage and attention from Coalition MPs before the 2018 state election.

At the peak of the coverage, Victoria's equal opportunity and human rights commissioner reported an 129% increase in complaints about racist incidents, which were directly attributed by the commissioner at the time to "inflammatory race-related political statements and reporting in January".

Mayek said the Covid lockdowns had meant there had been a reprieve in media coverage, but said African Australians were still being disproportionately targeted and fined by police because of their race.

Data released last year in Victoria revealed people who were born in South Sudan and Sudan were overrepresented in the fines issued for Covid-19 breaches. They made up 5% of the fines but only make up around 0.14% of the Victorian population.